

# The Latest Adventures of the Wonderful Creek ::

By T. W. HANSHEW

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FINDING himself alone in London with a glorious Sunday of summer balm and summer sunshine on his hands, Mr. Narkom had persuaded Creek to join him in a motor launch and an afternoon spin up the river, with the result that, teatime finding them in the neighborhood of Kingston, they had pulled up at Tagge Island and gone ashore to swell the already large gathering of men and women seated at the various tables scattered about under the canopy of the wind-waved trees.

Here they took tea, and when it was done it happened that Superintendent Narkom, setting down his cup and seeing no waitress at hand, rose from his seat for the purpose of signalling one to bring the bill, and it was out of that small circumstance the case of the Medici emeralds had its beginning. Brought thus prominently into view, the superintendent came to the notice of two gentlemen seated at a remote table and indulging in an earnest but inaudible discussion, and the elder of these, recognizing him, rose abruptly, said something in an undertone to his companion and forthwith walked hurriedly toward Mr. Narkom.

The superintendent saw him the instant he began to move and, having succeeded in attracting the attention of a waitress, resumed his seat and spoke in an undertone to Creek.

"Something must be up, I fancy," he said. "Mansell-of Mansell & Son, of Hutton Gardens, lapidaries and dealers in precious stones—was seated at one of those tables over there in company with a young man who looks like an Italian. The moment he saw me he jumped up and is making his way here, looking very much as if he had something on his mind."

He had, and a moment later he manifested that fact without preface of any kind.

"I say, Mr. Narkom," he said, coming suddenly up and resting an agitated hand upon the back of the superintendent's chair, "you are just the man I most want to see. I'm in a fix, old chap, and I want you to get me out of it if you can. And not alone, unfortunately, but one of the best fellows in the world as well—Capt. Oswald Bolvarius of the Austrian Hussars. It means a lot to me, but it means more to him—ruin, disgrace, and all that sort of thing, don't you know. It's a robbery case, Mr. Narkom. Historic jewels valued at over forty thousand pounds. I'm entrusted to my care for repolishing and resetting. And gone like that—snapping his fingers—every blessed one of them!"

"Phew!" whistled the superintendent softly. "That's a serious matter. When did it happen, Mansell?"

"Four days ago. Last Thursday afternoon."

"And this is the first time you have communicated with the police?" Mansell asked, looking at him with a keen eye. "The matter hidden until this late day?"

"Young Bolvarius. Thought he had a clue to the thief and begged me not to do anything until he'd had a try at detecting the fellow himself, although I told him I felt certain that that man, Clerk of yours, would manage to get hold of them if only he'd appeal to him."

"A hopeless hope, that," put in Creek himself. "Clerk's on a government case—out in South Africa. No telling when he'll be back."

Mr. Mansell twitched his eyebrows and glanced inquiringly at the stupid-looking person in boating flannels who chose thus to butt into the conversation without being addressed, and Narkom, noting that glance and taking the hint from Clerk's remark, rose to the occasion.

"Mr. George Headland, one of my men from the Yard, Mr. Mansell," he said by way of introduction. "You, that is, if it is," replied the lapidary, modified. "Pleased to meet you, Mr. Headland. Not been at the business long, I suppose?"

"Not very," replied Clerk with due humility. "But may I ask you, Mr. Mansell, a question which I hope you will not think impertinent? Now, having allowed the Austrian captain to have his way in not communicating with the police, what in the world has brought him round to the point of consenting to do so after all?"

"He hasn't, head," as a matter of fact, he's still reluctant, still hoping against hope and shrinking from the affair getting to the count of Lamoretti's ears. I brought young Bolvarius up the river today thinking it would brighten him up a bit. About ten minutes ago I ran foul of my son-in-law, mentioned the matter to him in confidence, and he tells me that it is quite within the possibilities that Count di Lamoretti may hold me responsible for the loss of the jewels—since they were given into my charge, a receipt for them handed over, and it was I who delivered them to the swindling rascal who has made off with them. When I heard that—no more silence for Jim Mansell, you can stake your life I say, can't we go somewhere and talk the matter over in private, superintendent?"

"Certainly," interposed Creek. "I've hired a motor launch for the afternoon, Mr. Narkom, so if you and Mr. Mansell and Capt. Bolvarius will join me, we'll take a whiz up stream to some secluded spot and go into the details there."

the first time since the lapidary's appearance upon the scene Clerk and Mr. Narkom were in a position to exchange confidences without being overheard.

Five minutes later, in company with Mr. Mansell, the superintendent, and Capt. Oswald Bolvarius—whom he found to be an impetuous, almost boyish young man, who seemed more of a handsome simpleton than a knave—Creek was flashing up the river to its far upper reaches and to a tree-shaded inlet of which he knew. And here, in this place of green and fragrant mystery, the tale was told.

"Messieurs," began the young Austrian, responding to Mansell's demand that he should tell his part of it first, "messieurs, you may or may not know the history of the famous Medici emeralds."

"I do," put in Clerk, seeing from the manner in which the captain settled himself as he spoke that they were likely to be in for a long story. "They are of worldwide repute—the very purest and most perfect specimens that have ever been mined. They passed from the Borgias to the Lamoretis—their lineal descendants—becoming part and parcel of the unsalable heirlooms which descended to the succeeding generations of that race until they came at last into the life possession of the present Count Lorenzo di Lamoretti. Now go on with the story, please. But first, tell me something. Are the jewels that have been stolen in any way connected with the Medici emeralds, captain?"

"Monsieur, they are more than a mere connection—they are the historic Medici emeralds themselves," replied the Austrian. "I was entrusted by the Count di Lamoretti with the charge of them—the duty of bringing them to England and to Monsieur Mansell, there, and I did one month ago. Ah, yes, I know what you are about to say, monsieur—the Count di Lamoretti had neither the power nor the legal right to send them out of the country for any purpose whatsoever without the permission of the government and the sanction of his cousin, Signor Arturo Bonavelli. But, monsieur, he did not. He had both—the permission of the government, which allows no treasures of art or gems of historic interest to leave Italy and the sanction of his cousin, the heir-presumptive. Signor Bonavelli is about again to be married, and, in consideration of his wailing claim to certain unimportant properties and allowing the count to relieve his monetary difficulties by selling them, the count has promised to hand over the Medici emeralds—recut, reset, mounted in the modern fashion instead of the cumbersome medieval one in which they have remained since the fourteenth century—to the new Signora Bonavelli upon her wedding day."

"Hum-m-m!" commented Clerk. "That puts a different light upon the subject, certainly. But how, captain, do you come into the matter?"

A swift, embarrassed flush suffused the young man's countenance. He ever felt his hands passed one through the other, nervously, and the corners of his mouth twitched a little.

"Monsieur," he said, "it was with the sanction of the Italian government and permission of my own. I am known to Signor Bonavelli and—and it happens that I—well, I have long been a close acquaintance—a friend, if you will—of Signora the Contessa di Lamoretti."

The curious one-sided smile looped up the corner of Clerk's mouth and died down again and vanished. That was all. But if he said nothing, his thoughts were eloquent, and those thoughts ran like this: "A lover and a dupe! A silly simpleton, drawn into the net by a designing woman."

"It was in Vienna that this happened, monsieur," went on the Austrian, untroubled. "The count and countess were there at the time—so, too, was Signor Bonavelli, and both parties having proposed my name to the government, I was appointed envoy. I was not altogether happy in the appointment, monsieur, for I may frankly tell you that I have no love for Monsieur le Count, that he is never even civil to me, and would, I fear, do me any injury possible."

"Ah! Then is that the reason why you did not wish the police called in, captain? Why you get about seeking for the robber yourself? You suspected that he might prove to be no other than the count?"

"No, monsieur. That is not possible. The count is this minute lying in bed in Vienna—the result of a wound obtained in a duel fought the day before I left. He is confined to his room—in the charge of a faithful old servant—and it is rumored that he may never be able to rise from his bed again."

"And the countess—is she, too, with him?"

"At present, yes, monsieur. But the day before the duel she had gone on a visit to—Dumpe, monsieur, but I read in the Continental news of one of your London newspapers, two—or, perhaps, three—days ago, that she was in Vienna, personally nursing her wounded husband and for the most part confining herself to the room where he lies—merely leaving it for a morning ride in order to retain her own health under the strain."

"And to establish an alibi by being seen in public? A very clever move!"

"Yes, monsieur. I have no doubt. This was Clerk's unspoken comment upon this. Aloud, however, he merely said: "Well, let us get on with the story. If you please, captain. You were appointed envoy. The emeralds were entrusted to your charge and then what?"

"I came direct with them to London, and to Monsieur Mansell, as I had been instructed. I placed them in his charge, received his receipt for them. It had been arranged that upon a certain date—which

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date will be the Friday which is yet to come, monsieur—a messenger, a special envoy from Signor Bonavelli, should join me at my lodgings here, and that that messenger should come to me for a certain stamped and sealed order issued by the Italian government which we would together present to Monsieur Mansell, and upon which he would deliver the historic emeralds. These the messenger was to receive, and to journey with them to the Continent, leaving me free to complete my holiday. Four days ago, monsieur, nine days earlier than had been arranged, such a messenger did arrive in England. He did not come to me, however. Instead, he went directly to Monsieur Mansell, handed him the stamped and sealed order, and Monsieur Mansell delivered the emeralds to him. Man and jewels have disappeared from that moment and no trace of either has since been unearthed."

"Hum-m-m!" commented Clerk, punching his chin. "A bit of sharp practice that, and, no doubt, part of the original plan of these chief movers in the case. But why did Mr. Mansell deliver the emeralds to this stranger when you were not present, if, as you say, captain, he was aware of that part of the arrangement?"

"The dickens of it is that I don't remember that he did tell me that that was part of the obligation, Mr. Headland,"

I have. I didn't attach much importance to the document itself when I had that receipt, and—and the beggar must have carried it off with him!"

Apparently, Clerk did not turn a hair, but Narkom, watching, observed that his eyes went far round to the extreme angle of the sockets, and were quietly taking in Mr. James Mansell in from the tip of his boots to the top of his hat. Then he opened the throttle, gave the little launch her head, and swung out under the drooping trees to the main current.

For the next two minutes the progress of the little craft seemed to claim his entire attention; then, of a sudden, he slowed the engine down to half speed, lit a cigarette and lolled back, with his hat tilted over his eyes and his fingers laced behind his head.

"Too pretty here to shorten the voyage," he said serenely. "Captain, there's one thing you haven't made clear. If it wasn't possible to connect the Count di Lamoretti with the fellow who made off with the emeralds, who did you expect he would prove to be?"

"Monsieur, yes—I had," replied the young Austrian. "Perhaps it was an unjust suspicion, but—ah, le Dieu! who would not suspect anybody or anything, at such a time?"

It's a clear case of 'do' for both you and Mr. Mansell with a claim for heavy damages. Oh, it's likely to prove a very profitable speculation to some body!"

"Good Lord, man, you take it beastly cool. I must say. I wish I could," blurted out Mr. Mansell, in a fine fever of excitement.

In his indignation he had risen to his feet and was gesticulating as you might properly suppose a man would if he stood a chance of being held accountable for the loss of £40,000 worth of property which had been entrusted to his care. And just at that moment the launch bumped against something, with a soft jar that ran the whole length of the craft, and but for Clerk's quick-grabbing hand he would have been overboard in a twinkling. As it was, however, he was merely deposited in his seat again rather more forcibly than was comfortable, and as he followed the example of his three companions, and glanced over the side of the launch with which they had collided.

Creek saw it, too, swung over the wheel almost before you could say Jack Robinson, brought the launch round and pelted down stream after it. When the launch came abreast of the body, Clerk, catching up a rope, bent over and threw a delectable noose about it. Checked and



"Come down, Lamoretti, the sick bed dodge will not do!" he said. "Orsini's body has been found."

put in the lapidary himself. "I remember that he said the messenger would arrive with the stamped and sealed document authorizing him to receive them, but I don't seem to recollect him saying that he would come with the man. So, when the document was presented, I handed over the jewels and—there you are. I'm a careless beggar at best, as anybody will tell you."

"Hum-m-m! Yes, I should say so. How did the man get that stamped and sealed order, captain? Was it stolen from you?"

"No, monsieur. I still have it in my dispatch box. That is the greater puzzle of the thing."

"Examined it, captain?"

"Oh, no, monsieur, no. That would be exceedingly my duty and my privilege. The soldier may not ever do that."

"I should in this instance, if I were you," said Clerk calmly. "I make no doubt, captain, that you will find it a dainty document, and that the real order, stamped and sealed by the government, was given to the other fellow at the time the blank one was palmed off upon you. We shall know that when we see it, however."

"Yes, but the dickens of it is that you won't be able to see it, Mr. Headland," put in Mr. Mansell, with some slight show of agitation. "The blessed thing disappeared with the man who brought it. I took the fellow's receipt for the goods, of course; but that's all

man in the world who cherishes no liking for me—none at all. Not for any evil I have done him—ah, no! But simply because—because—well, because the Contessa di Lamoretti prefers my friendship to his, and he blames me because of that. He is a Tuscan, monsieur, his name is Antonio Orsini. He is in much favor with Monsieur le Count, and as neither likes me, nor wishes me well, why not this thing to ruin me? I did never see the man who carried that false order to Monsieur Mansell, but from what he is able to tell me of the thief's appearance—"

"You fancied it might be he?"

"Yes, monsieur. Certain points of the description tallied. Then, too, I wired immediately to my brother, inquiring if Orsini was still in Vienna with the count, as I had left him. My brother replied that he was not; that he had been gone a fortnight—back to his native Tuscany, and his home in Florence. Next, I wire there, to the authorities. They reply to me that he is not there, that he is supposed to be in Vienna—and I know, then, that there is some reason for this concealment of his real whereabouts. I feel more sure than ever that he has followed me to England, that the thief is he, and I start out on the search for him. Nothing—I find nothing, monsieur—not a trace, not a sign. My good name, my honor, they are lost!"

"Looks like it, I must say, captain," replied Clerk off-handedly. "Seems to me

only by that detaining line, and answering to the 'pull' of the swift-moving current, the gruesome thing lurched backward, flung up to view a stark dead face that shone like ivory through the wrapping froth, and Clerk had just time to see that a leather bag, slit down the full length of one side, was attached to it by a strap that crossed the breast and buckled behind the shoulders, when both Bolvarius and Mansell sent up a sudden mingled cry.

"Orsini!" shrieked the Austrian. "Orsini! Orsini!" And hard on the heels of that followed the lapidary's excited: "The robber! The swindler! Good Lord, Mr. Narkom, it's the fellow I gave the emeralds to! And look! See! There's the very bag he put them into!"

"Second thought, best owner!" said Clerk, twitching round at this and then pointing to the slit in the bag. "A dupe like our friend here, poor devil! Done by a pal! Now I know the game, and now I know the man. Here! Tie the rope fast to the shore. And let's make for the shore. I want to have a look through that poor wretch's pockets before we turn the body over to the river police. It looks like hurried work, that leaving of the bag upon the body, and hurried work may possibly result in leaving something else."

It had done so, as they discovered when they raced back into the secluded inlet and drew the dead shape upon the sloping bank, where they could see that dead

had come from stab wounds in the back. In the waistcoat pocket there was a little folded slip dated six days previously, written in a scrawling, illiterate hand, and which read simply thus:

To bar extras..... 8s. 6d.  
To one week's board and lodging 12s. 6d.

Total ..... £100 10s.

"Received with thanks."

"JOSHUA RIBSDALE"

"And Joshua Ribsdaled the Harp of Myddern three miles up the river," said Clerk as he read this and tied the body to a sapling that it might not get adrift again. "Back into the launch, gentlemen. This is the first real clue to the whereabouts of the emeralds. We will make a flying trip there without a moment's delay, and if—Hello! what's up? What's the matter with the captain?"

"Goodness only knows!" flung back Narkom. "He simply squawked and heeled over, and—Great Scott! the beggar's fainted. Clerk!"

"Clerk!" boomed out Mr. Mansell, switching round all eyes. "Good Lord, did—did you say 'Clerk'?" Mr. Narkom.

It was Clerk himself that replied.

"Yes, Clerk," he said quietly. "Back from South Africa on a rush, you see, Mr. Mansell. Hold on to the captain. The air of the river will soon revive him. Sit steady, Mr. Narkom; off she goes!"

Then with a swish the little screw revolved, the launch arrowed its way down the inlet and out into the river, swung round as if on a pivot, turned its bows in the direction where the Harp of Myddern stood, and flew like a gunshot toward it.

Swift as was its course, the captain had recovered consciousness before they had covered half the way to it, had gone, in the first moment of realization, into a sort of panic over the knowledge that they were going to the Harp of Myddern of all other places upon the face of the earth, and after a bit had cooled down and sat mulling to himself a reassuring something, which seemed to bring a sense of relief.

"That's right, captain," said Clerk as the launch clipped along with a white line creaming away in the wake of it. "Take it easy, my friend. In this one particular instance the Continental news in the London dailies is absolutely to be relied upon. The lady has taken good care of herself, be assured."

"Monsieur! I—I do not understand. You speak to me in riddles."

"A way of mine, captain. I deal in them. But there's no riddle like a woman and no friend like a bad one."

"What's that, sir?" said old Joshua Ribsdaled, answering the question put to him. "Anybody missing? Yes, to be sure, there is. A foreign gent, giving of the name of Johnston. I've a hunk, I reckon, and cheated me out of half a week's board and lodging, which, I will say for him, aren't like him, sir, seeing as he paid me prompt for the first two weeks and was a nice, pleasant-spoken gent—though wonderful return! and always keeping in and very free with his money at the bar. Disappeared sudden, in the middle of the night, last Friday—him and his bag together. What's that? Scotland Yard? What's up? That's all right. That we want to know," replied Narkom. "Your lost lodger's body has just been fished from the river. The man's been murdered—murdered and robbed, Mr. Ribsdaled, and it will be necessary for us to search this house."

"Search this—Heavens, sir!"

"Yes," said Clerk. "But that needn't bother you at all. Now tell me something. Was anybody else stopping here at the same time as this man who called himself Johnston?"

"Yes, sir. That old mamselle, sir, which I never could get the hang of her name, sir, she been French and not knowing of more than a dozen words of English. She's a very old woman—most eighty, I should think, Mr. Headland. What's that, sir? What's she come for? Oh, she's been comin' here and stoppin' off and on for six months past, sir. A bit dotty she is, too. Never goes nowhere outside her room when she comes, but stops there and crouns to her birds. A rare one she is for birds, too. I can tell you, sir. Has two big cages of 'em she carts everywhere with her—parakeets, most, and foreign creatures like that."

"When did the old lady arrive on the occasion of her latest visit? Was it before this foreign 'Mr. Johnston's' arrival or after?"

"Oh, before, sir. She'd been here upward of three weeks when he come. And a squabble they had the very first thing. Complained of the squawking of her parakeets annoying of him, sir, and said she ought to be put out of a respectable house. Fair flew at him she did when she heard that, and wouldn't so much as look in his direction afterwards. He was a fine fellow, too, did you say, sir? What was well played?"

"Nothing—nothing. Merely a figure of speech, Mr. Ribsdaled. And so this engaging old lady had a falling out with Mr. Johnston on the very first meeting, eh? And she kept absolutely aloof from him?"

"Yes, sir. Said she believed he was a wrong 'un, sir, and had her room changed, so as to be farther off from him. Felt sure, she said, that he'd do something to her birds out of sheer spite, and when they did start dyin' off all of a sudden, sir, swore that he was at the bottom of it—which was sheer nonsense, of course, because that didn't happen until after he had gone."

"Oh," said Clerk. "So the old lady's birds started to die off directly after this 'Mr. Johnston' disappeared, eh?"

"Yes, sir; the very next mornin'. Four of 'em all in one day; then five the next, and so on. Till she didn't seem to be doin' nothing, but just a-buryn' of the poor things wholesale. Or, at least, not just exactly a-buryn' of 'em, but just puttin' of 'em into a box underground—close by the wall at the bottom of the garden, sir—till she felt well enough to take 'em up to London to a taxidermist to be stuffed; for rare fond she was of 'em, sir, as that gent just behind you there can tell you, sir—I'd remember his name."

"Oh! Do you mean Capt. Bolvarius?"

"Oh, ave, that's the name. Excuse me for forgettin' of it, captain; but as you only called on mamselle twice and the name didn't exactly get fixed in my memory."

"Hello, I say! What's that? Capt. Bolvarius called on the old mamselle?" cut in Narkom excitedly. "Do you hear that, old chap?"

"Yes, certainly; but it doesn't surprise me," replied Clerk serenely. "I rather fancied, too, that that was why the captain fainted when he knew we were coming here. You see, when it became evident that the murdered man had been stopping in this place, he got nervous and frightened for fear of being in some way connected with the crime, because—well, because the old mamselle is a very close and very dear friend of his, and it would look bad if it became known that he had frequently been paying her secret visits."

"From the first moment Ribsdaled had drawn him into the affair, the captain had gone into a sort of collapse of terror; his face had grown white as chalk, his knees had begun shaking, and the very power of speaking seemed to have been wrenched away from him. Now, however, 'No, ah, Dieu! no, no!' he cried out in a very panic of alarm. 'It is wrong—it is wrong—no means true. I am not connected—namely of the saints, no—I am not. Nor is she, monsieur. I swear it on the honor of a soldier. She has nothing to do with the crime—neither crime. Now did I pay her many secret visits? I came but the twice, as the saints hear me, monsieur—but the twice! She is not French, she is Austrian; she is a companion, there is no other between us. She shall write to you from Vienna and tell you that I came but to say good-by on the night before her return.'"

"Before her what?" put in the inkeeper. "Lord, who told you as she'd returned to Vienna?"

"Lord, who told you as she'd returned to Vienna?"

"Oh," said Clerk with a sort of laugh. "Here still is she, Mr. Ribsdaled. Yes, sir, in her room, on the middle landing, the last three of her blessed birds died this afternoon, sir, she's 'gettin' ready to take 'em up to the taxidermist's this mornin', and comin' back for her boxes to be off to the Continent again in the mornin'."

"No," no! It is not true, monsieur. It cannot be true," exclaimed the captain, fairly carried out of himself by this unexpected announcement. "It is some tricksome lie. She is not here. She is in Vienna. I know she is in Vienna. The papers know, too. She has been seen there. They say so. She will return to England. Ah, yes, she will return before my month of holiday is out. But she is there—in Vienna—now."

"Yes, she is there now, I'll stake my life upon that, captain," said Clerk. "Yes, and I'll stake it afresh that she returned immediately after you last saw her—and you have seen her for the very last time, my friend. The Countess di Lamoretti is a clever woman, captain, too clever to throw herself away upon a boy like you. And you have simply been her dupe, her tool, the unconscious pawn in her deep little game and her worthy husband's well-planned schemes."

"The Contessa di—monsieur, you are mad. We talk not of her, but of the old mamselle, d'Laucours."

"And they are identical, my friend. Come now, make a clean breast of it, captain—and escape graver trouble—concerning the emeralds and the murder of Antonio Orsini. Because the contessa has made you believe that she loves you and abhors her husband. Confess that she arranged to meet you here—at this inn, that she trumped up some story with which she hoped you would be taken for a sudden return to Vienna, but that she promised to come back and be herself again, laying aside the hideous disguise of the old mamselle, d'Laucours."

"Monsieur! Ah, Dieu! Are you a wizard? Are you a sorcerer to find out things like that?"

"No, captain, only a mere mortal, who uses his wits and pieces out puzzles from the fragments that other men drop," said Clerk. "Be sure there is another old mamselle here, my friend, be sure the person who plays that role changed places with the Contessa immediately after you parted from her, and allowed her to get back to Vienna to establish an alibi for herself and her man, 'old master.' Now, come—p and see me pay my respects to this particular old mamselle, and when you see her—"

He stopped short, biting off his words and glancing upward for a sign from her then. Of a sudden a bent figure, swathed in shawl and leaning upon a knobbed stick—a figure which looked like that of an old woman, weak, tottering, becaped, a sort of witch of the street—stepped out in the modern garb of a French market woman—appeared at the top of the stairs, made as if to descend with the basket of dead birds which she carried, heard that clear, incisive voice, those threatening words, and came to an instant halt.

For a second the eyes above rosted full on the eyes below, and Clerk spoke up.

"Come down, Lamoretti, the sick bed dodge will not do!" he said. "Orsini's body has been found."

"Your friend and associate of the old Apache days, the old Margot days, and the swindling times in Paris? Then he sprang up the stairs, covering his three steps before the sound of a door being banged and a bolt being shot into its socket echoed through the house. "Outside, Mr. Narkom! Head him! He called back, 'Get to the window—quick! He's taken to his room.' Then pelted on again until the locked door of that room was reached and his shut fists were hammering upon it."

"Lamoretti, you are caged, caged, as you hear, you beast that killed his own confederate to cover up his tracks!" he cried. "You'll not pass the window, the superintendent of Scotland Yard is there. I want the emeralds and I want you, you've come to the end at last!"

Then the house echoed to a sharp explosion, the black "crack" of a pistol shot, and after it there was a jar, and then—silence."

When they came to break down the door and force their way in, the man was already dead."

Creek turned to Capt. Bolvarius.

"Let this be a lesson to you, you fool! If you must love any woman, let it be a good one. The emeralds? Oh, quite safe, and the legitimate heirs will get them. Lamoretti's plan? Faugh! a child might have guessed it; for all his cleverness, he bungled it so in the matter of getting away with the stones. Where are they? Look here!" He stooped and picked up one of the dead birds.

"The body still open, you see, and inside of it—this! He pressed. Oh, quite a bird, and out of the slit there appeared the edge of a large and magnificent emerald. "Dig up the little box beside the well for the rest of the jewels. The riddle is solved, gentlemen. Good afternoon."